

A COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

The Committee on Science has its roots in the intense reaction to the Soviet launch of Sputnik on October 4, 1957. Early in 1958 Speaker Sam Rayburn convened the House of Representatives, and the first order of the day was a resolution offered by Majority Leader John McCormack of Massachusetts. It read, “Resolved that there is hereby created a Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration....”

The Select Committee performed its tasks with both speed and skill by writing the Space Act creating the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and chartering the permanent House Committee on Science and Astronautics, now known as the Committee on Science, with a jurisdiction comprising both science and space.

The Science and Astronautics Committee became the first standing committee to be established in the House of Representatives since 1946. It was also the first time since 1892 that the House and Senate acted to create a standing committee in an entirely new area.

The Committee officially began on January 3, 1959, and on its 20th Anniversary the Honorable Charles Mosher said, the committee “was born of an extraordinary House-Senate joint leadership initiative, a determination to maintain American preeminence in science and technology....”

The formal jurisdiction of the Committee on Science and Astronautics included outer space – both exploration and control – astronautical research and development (R&D), scientific R&D, science scholarships, and legislation relating to scientific agencies, especially the National Bureau of Standards¹, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Aeronautics and Space Council and the National Science Foundation.

The Committee retained this jurisdiction from 1959 until the end of the 93rd Congress in 1974. While the Committee's original emphasis in 1959 was almost exclusively astronautics, over this 15-year period the emphasis and workload expanded to encompass scientific research and development in general.

In 1974, a Select Committee on Committees, after extensive study, recommended several changes to the organization of the House in H. Res. 988, including expanding the jurisdiction of the Committee on Science and Astronautics, and changing its name to the Committee on Science and Technology.

Jurisdiction over energy, environmental, atmospheric, civil aviation R&D, and the National Weather Service issues was added to the general realm of scientific research and development.

In addition to these legislative functions, the Committee on Science and Technology was assigned a “special oversight” function, giving it the exclusive responsibility among all Congressional standing committees to review and study, on a continuing basis, all laws, programs and government activities involving Federal nonmilitary research and development.

In 1977, with the abolition of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, the committee was further assigned jurisdiction over civilian nuclear research and development thereby rounding out its jurisdiction for all civilian energy R&D.

A committee's jurisdiction gives it both a mandate and a focus. It is, however, the committee's chairman that gives it a unique character. The Committee on Science and Technology

¹ Now named the National Institute of Standards and Technology (P.L. 100-418, Title V, Part B, Subpart A, Sections 5111 through 5163, enacted August 23, 1988)

has had the good fortune to have nine very talented and distinctly different chairmen, each very creative in his own way in directing the committee's activities.

Congressman Overton Brooks was the Science and Astronautics Committee's first chairman, and was a tireless worker on the committee's behalf for the two and one-half years he served as chairman.

When Brooks convened the first meeting of the new committee in January of 1959, committee Member Ken Hechler recalled, "There was a sense of destiny, a tingle of realization that every member was embarking on a voyage of discovery, to learn about the unknown, to point powerful telescopes toward the cosmos and unlock secrets of the universe, and to take part in a great experiment." With that spirit the committee began its work.

Brooks worked to develop closer ties between the Congress and the scientific community. On February 2, 1959, opening the first official hearing of the new committee Chairman Brooks said, "Although perhaps the principal focus of the hearings for the next several days will be on astronautics, it is important to recognize that this committee is concerned with scientific research across the board." And so, from the beginning, the committee was concerned with the scope of its vision.

Overton Brooks died of a heart attack in September of 1961, and the chairmanship of the committee was assumed by Congressman George Miller of California.

Miller, a civil engineer, was unique among Members of Congress who rarely come to the legislature with a technical or scientific background. He had a deep interest in science, and his influence was clearly apparent in the broadening of the charter of the National Science Foundation and the establishment of the Office of Technology Assessment. He pioneered in building strong relationships with leaders of science in other nations. This work developed the focus for a new subcommittee established during his chairmanship, known as the Subcommittee on Science, Research and Development.

Just a few months before Miller became Chairman, President John F. Kennedy announced to a joint session of Congress the national commitment to land a man on the moon and return him safely to Earth before the end of the decade. Thus, during Miller's 11-year tenure as chairman, the committee directed its main efforts toward the development of the space program.

Chairman Miller was not reelected in the election of 1972, so in January of 1973, Olin E. Teague of Texas took over the helm of the committee. Teague, a man of directness and determination, was a highly decorated hero of the Second World War. He was a long-standing Member of Congress and Chairman of the Veterans Committee before taking over the chairmanship of the Science and Technology Committee.

Throughout the 1960's and early 1970's, Teague chaired the Science Committee's Manned Space Flight Subcommittee, and in that capacity firmly directed the efforts to send a man to the moon.

As chairman of the committee, Teague placed heavy emphasis on educating the Congress and the public on the practical value of space. He also prodded NASA to focus on the industrial and human applications of the space program.

One of Teague's first decisions as chairman was to set up a subcommittee on energy. During his six-year leadership of the committee, energy research and development became a major part of the committee's responsibilities.

In 1976, Chairman Teague saw the fruition of three years of intensive committee work to establish a permanent presence for science in the White House. The Office of Science and

Technology Policy was established with a Director who would also serve as the President's Science Advisor.

Throughout his leadership, he voiced constant concern that the complicated technical issues the committee considered be expressed in clear and simple terms so that Members of Congress, as well as the general public, would understand the issues.

After six years as Chairman, Teague retired from the committee and the Congress due to serious health problems and was succeeded by Don Fuqua, a representative from northern Florida.

Fuqua became Chairman on January 24, 1979, at the beginning of the 96th Congress. Don Fuqua came to the Congress after two terms in the Florida State Legislature and was, at age 29, the youngest Democrat in Congress when he was elected in 1962.

Fuqua's experience on the Committee dated back to the first day of his Congressional service. Since 1963, he served as a Member of the Committee's Manned Space Flight Subcommittee. When Olin Teague became chairman of the full Committee in 1973, Fuqua took Teague's place as chairman of the subcommittee.

As the subcommittee chairman he was responsible for major development decisions on the Space Shuttle and the successful Apollo-Soyuz link-up in space between American astronauts and Soviet cosmonauts. Later, the subcommittee's responsibility was expanded to cover all other NASA activities and was renamed the Subcommittee on Space Science and Applications.

As Chairman of the Committee, Fuqua's leadership could be seen in the expansion of committee activities to include technological innovation, science and math education, materials policy, robotics, technical manpower, and nuclear waste disposal. He worked to strengthen the committee's ties with the scientific and technical communities to assure that the committee was kept abreast of current developments, and could better plan for the future.

During the 99th Congress, the Science and Technology Committee, under Fuqua's chairmanship, carried out two activities of special note:

- The Committee initiated a study of the nation's science policy encompassing the 40-year period between the end of the Second World War and the present. The intent was to identify strengths and weaknesses in our nation's science network. At the end of the 99th Congress, Chairman Fuqua issued a personal compilation of essays and recommendations on American science and science policy issues in the form of a Chairman's Report.
- The second activity was a direct outgrowth of the Space Shuttle *Challenger* accident of January 28, 1986. As part of the Committee's jurisdictional responsibility over all the NASA programs and policies, a steering group of Committee Members, headed by Congressman Robert Roe, the Ranking Minority Member, conducted an intensive investigation of the Shuttle accident. The Committee's purpose and responsibility were not only the specific concern for the safe and effective functioning of the Space Shuttle program, but the larger objective of insuring that NASA, as the nation's civilian space agency, maintain organizational and programmatic excellence across the board.

Chairman Fuqua announced his retirement from the House of Representatives at the termination of the 99th Congress. He had served 24 years on the Committee on Science and Technology and eight years as its Chairman.

Congressman Robert A. Roe of New Jersey, a long-time Member of the Committee, became its new Chairman at the beginning of the 100th Congress. Congressman Roe was trained as an

engineer and brought that broad knowledge and understanding to bear on the Committee's issues from the first day of his tenure.

Congressman Roe's first official act as Chairman was to request a change in the Committee's name from the Committee on Science and Technology to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. This change was designed not only to reflect the Committee's broad space jurisdiction, but also to convey the importance of space exploration and development to the Nation's future.

In the 100th Congress, under Chairman Roe's stewardship, the Committee kept close scrutiny over NASA's efforts to redesign and reestablish the space shuttle program. The successful launch of the Space Shuttle *Discovery* in September 1988 marked America's return to space after 32 months without launch capability.

The vulnerability of having the nation's launch capability concentrated singularly in the Space Shuttle, and the rapid increase of foreign competition in commercial space activities, precipitated strong Committee action to help ensure the competitive posture of the Nation's emerging commercial launch industry.

Chairman Roe's leadership to stabilize and direct the Nation's space program led to the Committee's first phase of multi-year authorizations for research and development programs with the advent of three year funding levels for the Space Station.

Within the national movement to improve America's technological competitiveness, Chairman Roe headed the Committee's initiative to expand and redefine the mission of the National Bureau of Standards² in order for it to aid American industry in meeting global technological challenges.

The Science Committee has a long tradition of alerting the Congress and the Nation to new scientific and technological opportunities that have the potential to create dramatic economic or societal change. Among these have been recombinant DNA research and supercomputer technology. In the 100th Congress, Members of the Committee included the new breakthroughs in superconductivity research in this category.

Several long-term efforts of the Committee came to fruition during the 101st Congress. As the community of space-faring nations expanded, and as space exploration and development moved toward potential commercialization in some areas, the need arose for legal certainty concerning intellectual property rights in space. Legislation long advocated by the Science Committee defining the ownership of inventions in outer space became public law during this Congress.

Continuing the Committee's interest in long range energy research programs for renewable and alternative energy sources, a national hydrogen research and development program was established to lead to economic production of hydrogen from renewable resources its use as an alternative fuel.

At the end of the 101st Congress, the House Democratic Caucus voted Representative Roe Chairman of the Public Works and Transportation Committee to fill the vacancy in that Committee's Chairmanship.

The hallmark of Representative Roe's four-year tenure as Chairman was his articulation of science, space, and technology as the well-spring for generating the new wealth for America's future economic growth and long-term security.

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At the beginning of the 102nd Congress in January 1991, Representative George E. Brown, Jr. of southern California became the sixth Chairman of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee. Trained in industrial physics, Brown worked as a civil engineer for many years before entering politics.

Elected to the Congress in 1962, Brown was a member of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee since 1965. During his more than two-decade tenure on the Committee before becoming its Chairman, he chaired subcommittees on the environment, on research and technology, and on transportation and aviation R&D.

Whether from his insightful leadership as a subcommittee chairman or from the solitary summit of a futurist, Brown brought a visionary perspective to the Committee's dialogue by routinely presenting ideas far ahead of the mainstream agenda.

George Brown talked about conservation and renewable energy sources, technology transfer, sustainable development, environmental degradation, and an agency devoted to civilian technology when there were few listeners and fewer converts. He tenaciously stuck to these beliefs.

Consistent with his long-held conviction that the nation needed a coherent technology policy, Brown's first action as Chairman was to create a separate subcommittee for technology and competitiveness issues. During his initial year as Chairman, Brown developed an extensive technology initiative that was endorsed by the House of Representatives in the final days of the 102nd Congress. The work articulated Brown's concept of a partnership between the public and private sectors to improve the nation's competitiveness.

The culmination of the 102nd Congress saw Brown's persistent efforts to redirect our national energy agenda come to fruition. The first broad energy policy legislation enacted in over a decade included a strong focus on conservation, renewable energy sources, and the expanded use of non-petroleum fuels, especially in motor vehicles.

In Brown's continuing concern to demonstrate the practical application of advances in science and technology, he instituted the first international video-conferenced meetings in the U.S. Congress. In March of 1992, Members of the Science Committee exchanged ideas on science and technology via satellite with counterparts from the Commonwealth of Independent States. This pilot program in the House of Representatives resulted in a decision to establish permanent in-house capacity for video-conferencing for the House.

As a final activity in the 102nd Congress, Brown issued a Chairman's report on the Federally funded research enterprise. The work was intended to as the starting point for a comprehensive review and revision of federal science policy currently in the planning stage.

The 1994 congressional elections turned over control of the Congress to the Republican Party. The House Republican Conference acted to change the official name of the Committee from Science, Space, and Technology to the Committee on Science. Robert S. Walker of Pennsylvania became the Science Committee's first Republican Chairman, and the seventh Committee Chairman. Walker had served on the Science Committee since his election to Congress in 1976, and had been the Ranking Member since 1989.

Chairman Walker acted to streamline the subcommittee structure from five to four subcommittees: Basic Research, Energy and Environment, Space and Aeronautics, and Technology. This action reflected the new Congress' mandate to increase efficiency and cut expenses, and also reflected Walker's personal desire to refocus the Committee's work. Due to the reduction in the number of subcommittees and a sharper focus on the issues, the number of hearings was reduced, while the number of measures passed by the House and signed into law increased.

Chairman Walker chose to use the Full Committee venue to hold hearings exploring the role of science and technology in the future. The first hearing, “Is Today’s Science Policy Preparing Us for the Future?” served as the basis for much of the Committee’s work during the 104th Congress.

For the first time in recent Science Committee history, the Committee and the House of Representatives passed authorizations for every agency under the Committee’s jurisdiction. To preserve and enhance the core Federal role of creating new knowledge for the future, the Science Committee sought to prioritize basic research policies. In order to do so, the Committee took strong, unprecedented action by applying six criteria to civilian R&D:

1. Federal R&D efforts should focus on long-term, non-commercial R&D, leaving economic feasibility and commercialization to the marketplace.
2. All R&D programs should be relevant and tightly focused to the agencies’ missions.
3. Government-owned laboratories should confine their in-house research to areas in which their technical expertise and facilities have no peer and should contract out other research to industry, private research foundations and universities
4. The Federal Government should not fund research in areas that are receiving, or should reasonably be expected to obtain, funding from the private sector.
5. Revolutionary ideas and pioneering capabilities that make possible the impossible should be pursued within controlled, performance-based funding levels.
6. Federal R&D funding should not be carried out beyond demonstration of technical feasibility. Significant additional private investment should be required for economic feasibility, commercial development, production and marketing.

The authorization bills produced by the Science Committee reflected those standards, thereby protecting basic research and emphasizing the importance of science as a national issue. As an indication of the Science Committee’s growing influence, the recommendations and basic science programs were prioritized accordingly.

During the 104th Congress, the Science Committee’s oversight efforts were focused on exploring ways to make government more efficient; improve management of taxpayer resources; expose waste, fraud and abuse, and give the United States the technological edge into the 21st century.

The start of the 105th Congress brought another change in leadership to the Committee. Congressman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., a Republican from Wisconsin, became the eighth Chairman after Chairman Walker retired from Congress. Sensenbrenner had been a member of the Committee since 1981 and prior to his appointment as Committee head, he served as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics.

At the start of the 105th Congress, the Speaker of the House charged the Science Committee with the task of developing a long-range science and technology policy. Chairman Sensenbrenner appointed the Committee’s Vice Chairman, Representative Vernon Ehlers of Michigan, to lead a study of the current state of the Nation’s science and technology policy. The National Science Policy Study, entitled “*Unlocking Our Future Toward A New National Science Policy*” was unveiled in September 1998 and was endorsed by the Full House on Oct. 8, 1998.

The Science Policy Study continues to serve as a policy guide to the Committee, Congress and the scientific community.

The Science Committee played a crucial role in numerous issues of national and international significance during Chairman Sensenbrenner's tenure. Acting in accordance with the Committee's jurisdiction over climate change issues, Chairman Sensenbrenner was chosen by the Speaker of the House to lead the U.S. delegation to the Kyoto (Dec. 97), Buenos Aires (Nov. 98), and The Hague (Nov. 2000) global warming conferences. Under Chairman Sensenbrenner's leadership, the Committee examined the science supporting the Kyoto Protocol and the economic impacts the treaty could have on the country.

Much of the world anxiously awaited midnight of January 1, 2000 to see if the Year 2000 (Y2K) computer problem would cause the catastrophe that some had predicted. The Science Committee through the Subcommittee on Technology, Chaired by Constance Morella (R-MD), held its first hearing on the Y2K problem in 1996 and held or participated in over 30 hearings on the subject. The Committee's aggressive oversight pushed federal agencies to meet their deadlines to ensure the safety and well being of American citizens. Thankfully, the U.S. and the world experienced very minor problems associated with the Y2K rollover.

Over many years, and during the tenure of several chairmen, the Science Committee closely monitored development of the International Space Station. In October of 2000, a crew of American and Russian astronauts became the first inhabitants of the space station.

One of Chairman Sensenbrenner's priorities was to achieve a steady and sustained growth in Federal R&D investments. During his tenure, funding for civilian Federal R&D increased by 39 percent. Funding for the National Science Foundation increased percent, including its highest ever appropriation in FY2001.

The start of the 107th Congress brought another change in the Committee's leadership. Representative Sensenbrenner was elected Chairman of the Judiciary Committee and on January 3, 2001, Representative Sherwood L. Boehlert from New York's 23rd Congressional District became the new Chairman of the Committee on Science.

Boehlert had served on the Science Committee since first taking office in 1983 and had earned a reputation for independence, moderation and thoughtful leadership. In his first speech as Chairman, Boehlert pledged to "build the Science Committee into a significant force within the Congress," and "to ensure that we have a healthy, sustainable, and productive R&D establishment – one that educates students, increases human knowledge, strengthens U.S. competitiveness and contributes to the well-being of the nation and the world."

With those goals in mind, Boehlert laid out three priorities for the Committee -- "The Three E's" – science and math education, energy policy, and the environment – three areas in which Boehlert believed the resources and expertise of the scientific enterprise could be brought to bear on issues of national significance. Under Boehlert's leadership, the Committee succeeded in getting important legislation on these and other priority areas signed into law.

Boehlert also reorganized the Subcommittees to reflect these new priorities. The four Subcommittees became Research; Energy; Environment, Technology and Standards; and Space and Aeronautics.

In the energy area, the Committee unanimously approved the research and development portions of the House-passed Energy bill (H.R. 4). Committee provisions were designed to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil by investing in energy efficiency, renewable energy technologies, improved nuclear energy technologies, and new fossil fuel technologies, including clean coal.

On education, the Committee saw its major initiatives in both K-12 and undergraduate education signed into law as part of H.R. 4664, the National Science Foundation authorization. Among the education initiatives were the Committee's version of President George W. Bush's proposal to establish National Mathematics and Science Partnerships that will put our nation's universities and businesses to work to help improve education.

On environment, the Committee passed legislation to strengthen science at the Environmental Protection Agency and brought attention to the science behind several controversial issues, including arsenic in drinking water, particulate air pollution and global climate change.

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, terrorism moved to the forefront of the Committee's agenda. Heeding Chairman Boehlert's admonition that "the war on terrorism will be won in the laboratory as much as on the battlefield," the Science Committee worked to ensure that the Federal Government was investing in the science and technology necessary to combat terrorism over the long term.

The Committee first turned its attention to cyberterrorism. Boehlert's legislation to address these challenges had broad bipartisan support in Congress, and on November 27, 2002, the "Cyber Security Research and Development Act" was signed into law.

Under Boehlert's leadership, the Committee also took the lead in responding to the concerns of family members of September 11th victims, regarding the investigation into the collapse of the World Trade Center. After two high-profile hearings into the matter, the Committee introduced legislation to enable the government to respond more quickly to building failures and to overcome the problems that plagued the World Trade Center investigation. Signed into law on October 1, 2002, the legislation puts the National Institute of Standards and Technology in charge of all future building failure investigations.

The Committee also played a key role in the development of legislation establishing a new Department of Homeland Security, and led the push to make science and technology a priority in the new Department. Committee proposals creating an Under Secretary in charge of science and technology, and a Homeland Security Advanced Research Projects Agency were included in the final legislation, signed into law on November 22, 2002.

The Committee also held hearings on how to strike the proper balance between the need for openness to conduct research successfully and the need for secrecy to protect homeland security.

Finally, continuing the six-decade commitment of the Science Committee "to maintain American preeminence in science and technology," the Committee successfully enacted legislation that sets the National Science Foundation (NSF) on a path to doubling its budget over five years. Chairman Boehlert and Subcommittee on Research Chairman Nick Smith of Michigan led the bipartisan, bicameral effort to ensure that future generations will continue to reap the benefits of NSF's invaluable basic research.

In the 108th Congress, the Science Committee focused its attention on charting space and ocean policy, strengthening the U.S. economy by promoting research and innovation, and enabling the U.S. to better respond to terrorism and other emergencies by helping first responders.

Less than two months into the 108th Congress, the Space Shuttle Columbia, with her crew of seven, broke apart during reentry into Earth's atmosphere. This national tragedy renewed debate over the future of human space exploration. The Committee held several high profile hearings into the cause of the accident and exercised close oversight of the proceedings of the

Columbia Accident Investigation Board (CAIB), the independent investigative body convened by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to determine the cause of the accident.

Since the CAIB report was issued in August 2003, the Committee actively oversaw NASA's return-to-flight activities, particularly the implementation of the CAIB recommendation to establish an Independent Technical Authority at NASA. The Committee also closely monitored the cost of return-to-flight activities, and issues related to future Shuttle flights, including whether to launch a Shuttle mission to repair the Hubble Space Telescope.

The Columbia accident also prompted the President to issue a new vision for NASA – to return humans to the Moon and continue with a manned mission to Mars. Since that announcement, the Committee has held hearings and numerous briefings to evaluate the President's plan. Chairman Boehlert applauded the President for giving NASA a clear vision for the future, but also raised questions about the funding of the proposal and about its potential impact on NASA's work in Space and Earth Science and aeronautics.

The Committee also passed two key bills related to NASA and space flight, both of which were signed into law. The NASA Flexibility Act of 2004, introduced by Chairman Boehlert, gives NASA new personnel tools to attract and retain a top-notch technical workforce. The Commercial Space Launch Amendments Act of 2004, introduced by Space Subcommittee Chairman Dana Rohrabacher of California, creates a regulatory regime at the Federal Aviation Administration for the commercial human space flight industry, designed to encourage that industry's development while providing information on the inherent risks in space tourism and limiting that risk, as appropriate.

While the Committee was engaged in space policy, it was also leading efforts to revamp ocean policy. In May, 2004, Boehlert convened the first hearing in the House on the Preliminary Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. The report described an oceanic ecosystem that is fragile, threatened, and in dire need of national attention and commitment.

Among the more than 200 recommendations included in the report was a recommendation to pass an organic act for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which would clearly define and codify the agency's mission and functions. Representative Vernon Ehlers of Michigan, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Environment, Technology, and Standards, introduced such legislation and held a hearing on it.

Recognizing that innovation is the key to U.S. economic success, the Committee also focused its efforts on strengthening the U.S. research enterprise and American industry. In December 2003, President Bush signed into law Chairman Boehlert's 21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act, which authorized a better funded and coordinated interagency program in nanotechnology – an emerging field of science that the National Science Foundation estimates will be a \$1 trillion industry within the next decade.

The President also signed into law the Department of Energy High-End Computing Revitalization Act, which was introduced by Energy Subcommittee Chairman Judy Biggert of Illinois. The Act will foster research to improve U.S. supercomputers and make them more available to U.S. researchers.

Other Committee efforts to improve the economy included the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act, which will help combat a problem that costs U.S. fisheries millions of dollars; and the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Act, which sets up a new interagency program to find ways to limit damage caused by windstorms and which also reauthorizes the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program, which has been successfully

discovering ways to limit earthquake damage since 1977. Both bills were signed into law. The algal bloom legislation was sponsored by Chairman Ehlers and the windstorm bill by Representative Randy Neugebauer, a Republican from Texas. The earthquake legislation began life as a separate bill introduced by Michigan Representative Nick Smith, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Research.

Several other measures to help the economy were passed by the House, including the Manufacturing Technology Competitiveness Act, introduced by Chairman Ehlers, and the Green Chemistry Research and Development Act, introduced by Republican Representative Phil Gingrey of Georgia.

As important as any legislation was the Committee's effort to ensure that unnecessary visa delays did not discourage the world's top students and researchers from becoming part of the U.S. research enterprise. In a series of hearings and through a Government Accountability Office study, the Committee led a successful effort to reduce the waiting time for visas. Chairman Boehlert pointed out repeatedly that casting too wide a net in the visa process hurt America's research capacity while doing little to catch terrorists because the effort was not appropriately targeted.

Terrorism was also on the Committee's mind in other ways. The Committee continued its close oversight of research and development at the Department of Homeland Security, particularly in the area of cybersecurity.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 also highlighted the critical role of our nation's first responders. Two pieces of Committee legislation were enacted into law that would bolster Federal support for U.S. fire and emergency medical services. The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Act established a new program to provide grants to help fire departments hire firefighters. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Reauthorization Act of 2004 increased funding for the FIRE grant program – which provides competitively awarded grants directly to fire departments for the purchase of needed equipment, vehicles and training – and broadened the eligibility requirements to allow emergency medical services to also apply for the grants.